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The camp primarily targeted women who had lost their breasts due to cancer.

BY WALTER MWESIGYE

Mulago National Referral Hospital has successfully concluded a breast reconstruction camp that has transformed the lives of more than 20 women, including breast cancer survivors and patients seeking reduction surgery, amid rising demand for reconstructive and cosmetic procedures in Uganda.

The growing interest in such procedures reflects both medical necessity and changing perceptions around body image and quality of life. For some patients, surgery is not about aesthetics but relief from long-standing physical discomfort.

Ms Joy Nakimuli is one such beneficiary. She said years of living with excessively large breasts had taken a toll on her health.

"I had a lot of pain in the back and chest because my breasts were very heavy. I spent many sleepless nights and lived with constant discomfort," she said.

Ms Nakimuli had previously sought help from private hospitals but was unable to afford the procedure.

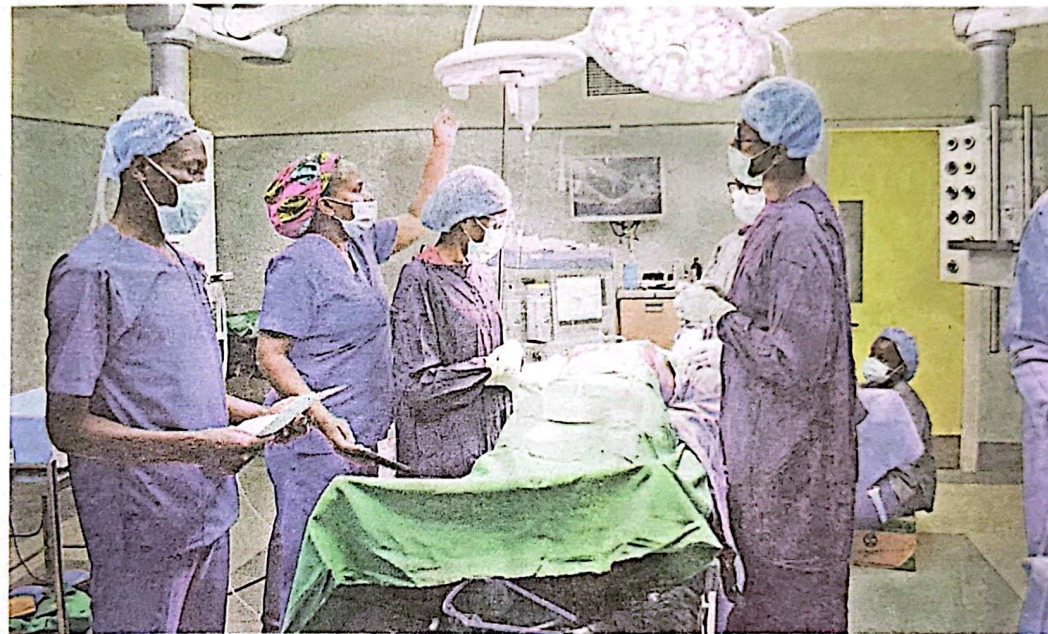
"I consulted widely, but many facilities were charging Shs15 million and above, which I could not afford," she added.

She has since undergone a four-hour surgery at Mulago and is now recovering.

In another ward, Ms Agnes Gasi from Arua is recovering after undergoing reconstructive surgery following a mastectomy. "My breast was removed in 2015 at Arua Hospital. I went through chemotherapy and radiotherapy and have been attending reviews at the cancer institute."

Dr Irene Asaba Mugisha, the head of

Mulago breast surgery camp restores dignity to women



Health workers conduct a surgery during the medical camp last Thursday. PHOTO/ MULAGO HOSPITAL

plastic and reconstructive surgery at Mulago National Referral Hospital, said the camp primarily targeted women who had lost their breasts due to cancer.

"Many of these patients have gone through surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, but are never informed that reconstruction is possible. This is a group that has endured significant physical and emotional trauma," she said.

She added that candidates are carefully screened before undergoing surgery.

The camp also catered for male pa-

tients with conditions such as enlarged breast tissue and benign lumps.

While the procedures were offered free of charge at Mulago, similar surgeries in private facilities can cost up to Shs15 million, putting them out of reach for many

Ugandans.

"These procedures are not only life-saving but also restore dignity especially for women who have lost their breasts," Dr Mugisha said.

However, specialists caution that re-

ABOUT PROCEDURE

Breast reconstruction is a surgical procedure that restores the shape of the breast after mastectomy or injury. At Mulago National Referral Hospital, the procedure is increasingly being offered to cancer survivors as part of post-treatment care. Doctors say reconstruction can be done using implants or tissue from other parts of the body, depending on the patient's condition. However, eligibility depends on factors such as overall health, completion of cancer treatment, and absence of underlying complications.

constructive and reduction surgeries come with limitations. One of the major concerns is the potential impact on breastfeeding.

"For patients with very large breasts, it may not always be possible to preserve the original nipple. In such cases, we perform a free nipple graft, but breastfeeding cannot be guaranteed," Dr Mugisha said. She added that in many reduction procedures, techniques are used to preserve the milk ducts, increasing the chances of breastfeeding in the future.

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